videotapes or kept a tape archive.

Nearly forty hours per week were programmed on average by all art organizations throughout New York State. This is an average of 315 shows per month, combining just the arts organizations we surveyed.

What kinds of services did arts organizations provide for access and local media production? These services included everything from video equipment loan to information and publicity. Artists and musicians comprised over a third of these organizations' clients, while a wide range of community organizations and individuals were also served. Media access and service organizations were serving both their core constituencies, as well as providing specialized services to the community at large.

About a third had production or post-production equipment available for community use. Of those organizations that specified their equipment, approximately two-thirds had basic production equipment — cameras and decks — while a third also had some editing facilities. A handful had production studios, and at the time of our survey, two had a *live feed*, direct live input to the cable system.[2]

Another role for arts organizations was publicity. A small proportion listed or reported on access programs in their schedules, newsletters and press releases. About a third of the respondents had the means to publicize access programming by printing reviews or schedules in their newsletters and calendars or by distributing press releases to local media.

Some organizations also provided other important services to local video and access producers. Sixteen percent provided training in video production. Over one-fifth had funds available for artists or producers; these were most often local or county arts councils, and a few media arts and community arts centers. Some had established video or access production as funding, regranting or residency categories, but many had not funded media artists as yet.[3]

## Art On Access

The kinds of productions made with the help of these media services were even more focused on artists' activity: 53 percent were either performing arts, documentation of art and artists, or media art forms.

Over half of the producers of these programs were artists, musicians or community organizations. Some of the tapes were produced cooperatively, most often with individual artists, art organizations and community organizations working together; these comprised almost half of all cooperative production arrangements mentioned.[4] Other producers noted were individual artists, musicians, universities, government, cable companies, independent producers, libraries and community colleges.

How were artists and art organizations using public access cable and video?

We surveyed many kinds of art organizations, ranging from small rural organizations to those serving mid-sized communities, to large multi-arts, multi-program organizations. Some, such as arts councils, performed mostly service functions, while others provided media access or production. We also surveyed some artist producers and independent distributors.

There were significant differences between these organizations in how they had used public access cable in the past, the potential they saw for it, and the problems or impediments to its use, depending a great deal on geography, their familiarity with television and the nature of their communities. One impediment nearly all shared was lack of access to equipment and training.

## Rural Arts Organizations

The rural arts organizations we surveyed provided a wide variety of arts services and activities, including visual arts exhibitions, workshops, concerts, residencies, information, regranting, and programs in schools.

Some used video to document performances or workshops, and others used cable to publicize events or services. Several saw potential for cable access. One was considering a video residency to work with other programs in folk art and architectural history. Another was curious about cable's potential for "opening up communications in

rural areas." A representative from the Cortland Arts Council noted that the council did get a response from its publicity on the access channel's Community Bulletin Board, and that they'd like to use access to further publicize and promote their programs, as well as to gain a greater audience for particular programs such as their arts-in-education work.

Fragmentation was a major concern. One organization served a county with twenty newspapers. Another, in the Catskills, noted that cable systems in the area generally served only the town centers, which averaged only a fifth of the population. Also, the cable systems in these towns were rarely interconnected, so each town had separate access programming.

Another concern was professionalism. One respondent noted that to obtain the high quality the organization required in all its activities, it would need to train its staff thoroughly, but it had neither the time nor the money to provide that training itself.

Additionally, while some rural cable systems provided access, in others access was inactive or consisted, for example, only of a Community Bulletin Board on the weather channel.

## Community Art Organizations

Community art organizations found the lack of access resources — equipment, training, and channel recognition — to be a major impediment to their use of access. The Chinatown History Project in New York City, the Native American Center in Buffalo, the Akwesasne Center near Massena, all shared this with other community arts centers, even though, with their own resources, they had already produced videotapes that they wanted to share with a larger public.

For example, the Rome Art and Community Center had a staff person trained in video production, who documented concerts, special events such as a drama workshop for hearing impaired children, as well as producing Public Service Announcements for TV. They found that access wasn't publicized enough to have a local presence.

A representative from another organization, which wanted to use video to document music performances and skits from their playwriting program, said that access clearly had potential as a community medium, but there was no one in the area with expertise to develop it. They said they felt they needed to use media that people were already tuned in to.

## Media Organizations

In the early years of public access, media organizations were the backbone of access, acting as informal access centers. In New York City in the early 1970s, over half of all shows were produced with the assistance of media organizations such as Raindance and Global Village.

Initially these organizations provided just about the only production and training for video — and for access channels. In the 1980s, these organizations primarily served professional media artists and consequently their programming focused on providing wider exposure for this work. Some of this change was a result of reduced interest on the part of funders for community based media. Still, these media centers served the widest variety of users with their services, and in many communities, provided the only video production resources for access.

At the time of our survey, we found media organizations still providing a professional level of equipment access and training, while often maintaining introductory services as well. Some provided artists' residencies. Several raised money from other sources to provide artists fees for the work they presented on access — most often works of professional artists, but occassionally for emerging artists as well. Often they also programmed series for access channels.

## Artist Producers

Several groups of artists produced programs specifically for access. These shows gained recognition for their innovative use of the medium, but most discontinued after a few years, citing the prohibitive cost of producing high quality TV without resources, and lack of support from funders and others. Also, since it was difficult to document access audiences, it was difficult for

them to substantiate the exposure their work received on access.

Artists Television Network in New York City was dedicated to television as an art form. It had shown innovative uses of the medium to large TV audiences instead of small, elite, closed-circuit gallery audiences. But director Jaime Davidovich found that many artists didn't understand the significance of access or of creating work for a TV audience. Other major factors in ending production of both the "Live!" show and "Soho TV" after over one hundred hours of programs were produced included the lack of access facilities in Manhattan and the lack of funding.

Irvington Film and Video Workshop, in Westchester County, is a non-profit organization providing a wide range of services to film and video artists. With volunteer staff comprised of artists themselves, the workshop produced a weekly call-in program on access about film and filmmakers, helped program independent work on cable, and bicycled these programs to several cable systems in the area. While they supported public access cable as "a dynamic medium for regional artists," lack of funding for these activities made continuing the programs impossible. At the time of our survey, the call-in show had ended. Other programming continued on an occasional basis.

LAMP (Light Audio Media Production), a university-based artists group in Syracuse, had produced a series of programs for access through collaborations between LAMP members, other area artists, Syracuse University and Rogers Cable. The collaboration went well. The programs, designed with audience call-ins to select the next section of the program and comment on previous segments, generated good response. But LAMP artists found the process time consuming and distracting from their individual art work. Also, they were disconcerted by a censorship effort by the cable company which, while unsuccessful, drained energy and morale.

The underlying thread is that lack of access resources was a problem for individual artists too. Lack of understanding — by other artists, support staff, and funders alike — of the possibilities of TV as an art form in itself also proved daunting for these projects. But the possibility of reaching a larger and more general audience remained an inspiration.

## Non-profit Distributors

Exposure – reaching new, greater and often general audiences – was the goal of non-profit distributors of independent video and film. But most found access an inappropriate medium because they were also dedicated to producing income for the artists whose work they distributed. Also, teachers made up one of their major distribution markets, and the probability that teachers would tape access programs off television, at home, remained a threat to distributors' base income. Distributors we surveyed, on the whole, did not use access.

## Arts Service Organizations

Service organizations, most often county or regional arts councils, provided a variety of services useful to access producers. They provided information about arts activities to affiliated organizations, which could include listing access programs. Information resources sometimes included sources of production or post-production facilities. Information and referral services were important functions for many local arts councils. Several ran regranting programs, although few of these had actually supported media projects. A few had been active in developing access resources for their area.

Some service organizations used access to promote their services or those of affiliated organizations, using Community Bulletin Boards, producing Public Service Announcements for access or other channels, or appearing on interview programs.

## Multi-Arts Organizations

Multi-arts organization often combined service with exhibition, presentation, and training activities. They used access in a variety of ways. Ones we surveyed include the Queens Council on the Arts, the Cultural Resources Council in Syracuse, Hallwalls in Buffalo, the Lower Adiron-

dack Regional Arts Council (LARAC), the Rensselaer Council on the Arts, the Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, the Lake George Regional Arts Project, the East End Arts Council, and the Islip Arts Council.

How did these service organizations see access? Rensselaer County Council on the Arts director Raona Roy saw access as offering "a way we could extend our current efforts to educate the art viewing public." Islip Arts Council director Lillian Barbash said, "We should be using cable more," since it was a "good community communications tool," but they did not have enough time, staff or money to do so. Joseph Golden, director of the Cultural Resources Council in Syracuse, said they used access to publicize their programs, but believed it had low viewership and thus low impact in their area. In contrast, LARAC director Pat Joyce noted that, in their heavily cabled area, there was a magazine format access show that "everybody watched," and that they would like to use access more. But no facilities existed in their area, so this would have entailed the council purchasing its own equipment. Production staff member Samuel Lee noted that the Queens Council for the Arts had produced several programs for access and provided some production equipment and assistance, video documentation of art and artists for audition and study, and fiscal sponsorship for some productions.

The East End Arts Council had created audio and photo documentation of several communities in the area, including Shinnecock Indians, Polish, Jewish and Black communities, and hoped to do similar projects using video. They noted that interest and expertise for this work came from the community.

Hallwalls, in Buffalo, had been active in several aspects of video and access, including curating series for access of local and imported programs, co-producing tapes with community organizations, creating projects for artists to experiment with video, and then compiling these works for access, and working with other groups to create and support access facilities in the region. Funding for these efforts came from the organiza-

## Multi-Arts Organizations' Activities

| activity | Queens Council on Arts | Cultural Resources Council | Hall-walls | Lower Adirondack Council | Rens-selaer Cncl. | Schwein-furth Museum | Lake George Project | E. End Arts Cncl. | Islip Arts Cncl. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| curate series | √ | | √ | | | | | | |
| loan equipment | √ | | √ | | | | | | |
| pay artists' fees | | | √ | | | | | | |
| document performances | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ |
| help develop access | √ | | √ | | | | | | |
| info services | √ | √ | | √ | | | | √ | |
| appear on access | | √ | | √ | √ | | | | |
| put publicity on CBB | √ | √ | √ | | | | √ | √ | √ |
| in-house video | | √ | | | | | | √ | √ |
| put tapes on access | √ | | √ | √ | | | | | √ |

tion's operating budget and from a city block grant.

## Summary of Arts and Access

How have arts organizations used access? How have artists used access?

- announcing events on Community Bulletin Boards
- placing Public Service Announcements on access channels
- appearing on talk/interview programs
- producing their own shows about artists
- documenting performances
- documenting exhibitions
- curating series for access
- producing documentaries about local art, oral history, community culture
- producing video art collaborations for access
- other collaborative productions

How do art organizations see the potential of access to help meet their needs?

- to share their community based art activity more broadly, including workshops
- to educate the public about community culture
- to educate the public about art and art forms
- to bring more cultural activity to rural areas
- to give wider exposure to existing programs
- to increase outreach for art activities

Why aren't arts organizations using access more? What are the problems?

- lack of equipment for production and post-production
- lack of training for high production quality
- need to offer fees to artists' who produce work or show already produced work on access channels
- lack of staff time
- weak identity of existing access channels
- access channels not in use
- need to develop larger audiences for access
- fragmentation of rural cable systems, suggesting a need for interconnects in many areas.

What services do arts organizations offer — and what services could they offer access producers and artists?

- production and post-production facilities
- training
- aesthetic development (understanding TV, understanding video art)
- promotion (listings in calendars and newsletters, promotion to local media)
- residencies, fees for curated series, scholarships for priority groups
- regranting for media arts projects
- non-profit sponsorships for individual producers
- advocacy
- information on local resources
- a sense of community (feedback, developed or core audience)

Art and access seem a perfect combination. Arts programming, programming by artists and arts organizations, could be of general interest to the public, could be well produced, and could lend prestige to any access channel. For artists and art organizations, access could provide a way to expand audiences, gain publicity, educate audiences to more challenging art forms, and make better use or explore in more depth with the public the contributions of visiting artists and exhibitions.

But access has often meant frustration or has remained unexplored — for reasons related to its potential and strengths. Artists and arts organizations have been frustrated by the lack of resources for access: equipment, training and channel time, as well as the shortage of time to devote to an additional activity. Many access channels in the state lacked the public identity necessary for them to be an effective publicity tool. In a way, the

arguments are circular: the very things it seems that art programming could offer access are the lacks that prevent artists and arts organizations from using the channels.

One draw television has for artists is the potential for big audiences — which is also often the justification for funding TV projects for artists. Access, based on narrowcasting, cannot promise as big an audience as mass market channels can. And without the resources to conduct massive surveys, access cannot usually measure the size of its audiences.

Despite this conflict, artists and arts organizations we surveyed seemed interested in the potential of access. Several said that any outlet for publicity and audience expansion was important to them. Additionally, it seemed that increasing numbers of artists and arts organizations were experimenting with video, documenting their performances or workshops, with borrowed equipment or their own, and gaining experience and enthusiasm for the potential of the medium.

Notes:

1. The list of organizations we surveyed is obviously not exhaustive, nor necessarily representative of all groups serving artists in the state. We chose them because because we thought they could give us an overview of artists' activities in their regions, in a broad range of media. We also polled all access programmers about artists' use of access channels, and this, too, forms the basis for the analysis in this chapter. We sent approximately 400 questionnaires and received 93 responses. We conducted phone interviews subsequently with many respondents to insure information from a variety of groups.

2. Some had other equipment available as well, including a full production package with lights, audio mixers, sound systems, time-base correctors, special effects generators, microcomputers, super 8 film-to-half inch video transfers and other film-to-tape transfers. Some provided technician services. We surmise that those that did not specify their equipment owned primarily playback decks and monitors. The eighteen that specified equipment owned 43 video cameras and recording decks among them; most owned only one or two, while a few that provide equipment as one of their major functions owned the rest.

3. Funding for the media activities of the organizations we surveyed came primarily from the New York State Council on the Arts, private foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and corporate contributions.

4. One reason for cooperative production is to obtain access to video equipment to produce or to play back tapes. As noted above, only one third of the groups surveyed owned any equipment, and many noted lack of equipment access as a major reason for not producing video or for not participating in access.

# Chapter 13
# Access Center Profiles

## Lockport Community Cable Commission
### Municipally Run Public Access

Lockport gives an example of what can be achieved in public access television in a small community with a stable structure of support for access from the city or town, citizens, and the cable company.[1] In Lockport, this support began with the franchise agreement, which required the cable company to provide a certain amount of equipment and maintenance, plus a 3 percent franchise fee. The City earmarked the 3 percent franchise fee to municipal/community access operations. To administer this, it formed a municipal/community access center, the Lockport Community Cable Commission. It appointed a Commission (Board of Directors) and hired an Access Coordinator who had been a local media producer and community organizer.

Lockport started out with basic facilities: a building with a small studio and offices, some portable and editing equipment, a small staff, a small budget of approximately $45,000, and a community Board of Directors. In its two years of operation before our survey was conducted, Access Coordinator Joe Steinmetz had built on this base to extend access to the community.

For example, Lockport Community Cable Commission received funds from the Kitchen's Media Bureau to train senior citizens, and a grant from a New York State agency to train high school students in the summer. It also raised money from local businesses to underwrite -- or sponsor -- programs. And the staff produced some commercial work for pay, such as a tape for the local United Way chapter, as long as it did not interfere with public access production.

Additionally, Lockport developed ways to attract and develop volunteers and producers, multiplying the funds it received. For example, it provided matching grants of equipment access and seed money for producers, and even provided a grant to one of its volunteer producers to do publicity and outreach for the channel.

Part of Western New York's flat plains, Lockport had a feel of hometown America, with an added touch of history in its small downtown, the Locks of the Erie Canal, after which the town is named, and a stretch of well-preserved historic houses. Its proximity to Buffalo kept more artists and professionals in this bedroom community than other small towns might, but also made a sense of community harder to maintain.

The Lockport Community Cable Commission reported that its most frequent access users were community organizations, children and youth, and senior citizens, and most frequent program types were by and about community organizations, a local news magazine, and programs by or about children and youth. Lockport cablecast about eight hours of access programming per week, nearly all original.

Several programs were highlighted. Their "best produced" show, with a lot of promotion and a reliable volunteer crew, was "Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening," a religious talk show with remote coverage of events. Lockport High School students produced "Accent on Youth" after school, which consisted of news and information, footage of community events, a showcase of young talent, and reviews of what was going on around town.

Access Coordinator Steinmetz stressed, "It's important to cover non-Buffalo news." Buffalo is the nearest big city, and Lockport had no commercial TV station of its own. A regular talk show hosted by a retired journalist brought major political and community leaders into the access studio. The Kenan Center, a local arts center, produced another regular series.

Lockport had new and higher quality equipment than many access centers. Its studio included three 3-tube cameras, microphones, lights, and a character generator. It had one portable camera that could be used with either a 3/4-inch or a half-inch deck. In addition, three editing set ups — one half-inch and two 3/4-inch — and a mobile van were available for use by community producers. Fees were charged for equipment use, but well below commercial rates. Training was provided as needed by producers.

Ninety-five percent of access programming shown on Lockport's channel was produced

with this equipment. Other local sources of equipment included media centers, high schools, hospitals and users' own equipment. Both equipment and channel time was shared; equipment with occasional leased access producers, and channel time with Local Origination and leased access.

## Schenectady Cablevision and Schenectady Access Cable Commission
### Company-Run Access Backed by a Citizens' Support Group

In Schenectady, the combination of basic access facilities provided by the cable company through the franchise, an active citizen's media group monitoring the franchise and providing additional support, and an access coordinator familiar with non-profit organizations in her area created one of the most successful access operations in the state.[2]

Fifty-six hours of access programming per week ran on Schenectady's access channel 16, including eighteen weekly half-hour shows, hundreds of Public Service Announcements from community and social service organizations, a Community Bulletin Board, and two to three repeats of the weekly programs. The staff told us that program quality had improved in the channel's few years of operation as people became more knowledgeable about the equipment and aware of how to do things, and as they added better editing equipment.

Access coordinator Ruth Fonda saw public access is a public relations asset. Drawing on her years of experience in human service organizations, she focused on producing and playing hundreds of Public Service Announcements for community organizations. She told them, "It's the only place the public has any say in what's on the air. It's the only place you can get your entire message across, not just 45 seconds, but half an hour or more," and continued, "It's an outlet for talented people. You can see what it's like both behind and in front of the camera. You can get your message across — from human service organizations to personal opinions to pet projects."

Schenectady Access received the bulk of its funding through the franchise agreement, covering a small studio and office space, one and a half staff salaries, basic equipment and repair. The Schenectady Access Cable Council, a non-profit support group, raised money for an editing suite through membership ($5 for individuals, $25 for organizations) and helped with training and programming. (The franchise was being renegotiated during our survey)

Studio, portable equipment and editing equipment were all half-inch VHS. Altogether, the center had four cameras, four portable decks, a character generator and an editing suite. Small format equipment was chosen because of its accessibility. Said Fonda, "The public has VHS. They can bring in their kid's birthday tapes. One person can request and handle equipment." As a result, "The portable equipment is out every weekend." Production equipment was available free, while members of SACC could edit for $2 per hour on access programs, or $15 per hour for personal or commercial projects.

Training for portable and studio production consisted of a four-week class with one session per week. Editing instruction was available by appointment. The workshops cost $20 to $50 per series, and membership was required in order to sign up for training.

More than three-quarters of the program schedule consisted of regularly scheduled shows. Religious programs and producers were most numerous, although not all of these were just sermons or music. Other frequent users included local and state officials, and individuals who hosted talk shows. Other programs covered local political and social issues and local news.

Several programs came from outside the area. Some were bicycled through the library system from nearby Troy. Others included a country music and religion program from Texas ("High Country Caravan"), programs on consumer issues, Canadian tourism, and children's themes from government and community organizations, and shows from the Albany State Legislature and the Red Cross.

Through regular outreach in their own Public Service Announcements on the access

channel, a constant crawl across the Community Bulletin Board and HBO channel guide, and word of mouth — especially through the coordinator's contacts in human service organizations — the center built up a crew of four or five regular volunteers and three or four occasional ones, although Ruth Fonda noted that more were always needed. The part-time staff member had been a volunteer at the center.

## Sammons Communications – Cortland
### A Small Company-Run Access Center in a Rural Setting

Cortland Access, run as part of Sammons Communications' franchise in the Cortland area, had broad community involvement and a moderate amount of programming each week, in part as a result of consistent outreach efforts.[3] Coordinator Thomas Casey, who had grown up in Cortland and gained a background in literature and public relations, maintained a consistent PR presence in the town, with news releases, announcements of training and special programs. The local newspapers listed access programs both separately and together with regular TV listings. In general, local press had been responsive to Casey's attempts to give access more visibility, perhaps because the City Cable Commission had made a big deal of access.

What had the effect of access been? "It's tremendous," Casey told us. "It helps people put their message out, though it's more of a pedestal than a soap box." He said that the company felt that access had contributed to its visibility in the community.

Cortland had a moderate amount of equipment: a studio with a live feed, two portable cameras and decks, an editing system and a character generator, all half-inch VHS. Equipment use was free, and training, also free, was required for its use. About twenty percent of all access programming was produced with the center's equipment. Other local sources of video equipment included media centers, high schools, universities, corporations and producers themselves.

In addition to coordinating public access, Thomas Casey taped Cortland's Common Council meetings twice each month.

The main problem with access in Cortland at the time of our survey was the lack of a solid group of volunteers. As the sole staff person responsible for production, training, outreach and programming, Casey did not have enough time to build and direct this group, which would have allowed more residents to produce programming at the center and help build the channel.

Cortland is a small city in one of New York State's most rural — and poorest — counties. Poor rural areas are the most difficult places in which to find people who can afford the time for volunteer activities, which may be one reason that most of Cortland's programs came from local institutions and organizations. In a sense, the program schedule reflected a portrait of the town. Nevertheless, Casey was able to help some individual producers get their programs going. For example, he assisted one to produce a live series about Cortland, "Economic Development in Action."

The list of access users in just one month in this small rural city was impressive. The most frequent users and program types were religious, local government and education/schools.

## Woodstock Access TV and Media Bus
### A Non-Profit Media Group Runs Access

Woodstock is undoubtedly a special place — nestled in the scenic Catskill mountains, for decades a gathering place for artists and writers, and nationally renowned for its proximity to one of the defining cultural events of the 1960s of the same name. One might expect that Woodstock Access TV would be special, too.

Woodstock has had access TV longer than almost any other place in New York State. Some time in the early 1970s, the town of Woodstock negotiated for and received a town channel, one of twelve channels on the system. (The Woodstock cable system is now part of Kingston Cablevision, but access is added just for Woodstock subscribers to a microwave relay from Kingston.)[4] A local resident ran the channel until he "burned out." In 1978, Media Bus, a local media organization,

received permission from the town to reactivate the feed and the channel. It took some time for the people involved in Media Bus to figure out where the live feed was and establish a studio — finally in an old church near the center of town. They set up Woodstock Access TV, a non-profit organization, to program and operate Channel 6, and the town set up the Woodstock Cable Commission, mostly to deal with technical questions such as line extensions and signal quality.

The channel was legally a municipal channel operated as a public channel by a non-profit media organization. Media Bus provided equipment, staff and training, put out the newsletter, and joined the Board of Woodstock Access TV. The town provided utilities and space, and the cable company provided the live feed.

WATV consisted of a small studio with three one-tube cameras, a 3/4-inch portable deck, a 3/4-inch editing system, and a character generator. Training was provided free on weekends to members.

Since WATV did not receive funding from the town or from the franchise fee, it had to be quite imaginative in raising funds for its operation. It charged fees from video producers, and charged for memberships and rentals of equipment. It raised grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and private foundations. It drummed up underwriting from local businesses and community organizations, displayed on the channel's famous erector set on-air rollodex. All these were sources of funds for the channel or for individual projects. Regular fundraising events also helped, such as a Valentine's Day costume party, where each band received a videotape of its performance as well as exposure on the channel itself.

Much of the 24 hours a week of programming was carried live, or near live. Regular programs included tapes of town board meetings and a high school satire and variety show, whose host, "Uncle Mike," screened lip-sync clips by local kids as well other material. The Sheriff's Department had a show about crime; one program showed how shoplifting was done so merchants would know what to look for. A show by local poets and another by teenagers were also seen regularly. A gay show — which caused controversy, as some found it "tasteless and obscene" — was moved to late evening hours. Tapes were also imported from access producers in other parts of the state, including Paper Tiger TV and X-Change TV, both from New York City.

The controversy over the gay show was not unusual for Woodstock. Flare-ups had occurred over coverage of town council meetings and other issues. Part of this was due to the channel's unclear definition as both a public and a municipal channel. But in a way this was also an expression of Woodstock's democratic nature. According to Media Bus Director Bart Friedman, "Woodstock has wide differences in its population in many ways. No one could be a dictator here, there are so many powerful groups. For example, the local newspaper has four to five pages of letters. In general, the battle over the channel is a labored, slow, painful but democratic process."

## Capitol Cablevision - Albany
### Company-Run Access with Community-Run Centers

Albany, the state capitol, is a thriving and historic city. The wide plaza and great white monoliths of the state office buildings overlook the Hudson River on one side and at first glance seem to overwhelm the city that surrounds them. But local institutions are strong, and this is reflected in the operations and programming of cable access here.

Access in Albany, although it was coordinated through the cable company itself, Capitol Cablevision, was jointly programmed by other community institutions at the time of our survey.[5] (See the profile of Albany Public Library in the Libraries chapter.) Also, access and Local Origination production merged here, as they did in many other cable systems in the state. In Albany, this created a large amount of community programming that, however, was not strictly access programming.

Two channels, 8 and 9, carried twenty-seven hours of public, government and educational access, as well as related basic program-

ming. For example, Channel 9's public access fare included three-hour or four-hour blocks of programming by Albany Public Library on Monday and Thursday evenings; these included library and public productions. Channel 8 mixed educational programming with programming from the Learning Channel from 6 am to 4 pm. From 4 to 6 pm, municipal or state government programs were cablecast. One municipality in the Albany area added its own PEG (public-educational-government) access to these channels just for subscribers.

A combination of effective personal outreach and consistent use of college and high school interns to supplement his staff enabled Community Programming Director Greg Babbitt to assist a wide variety of local groups to produce programs. Outreach efforts included annual questionnaires, continued personal contacts, and tours of facilities for community groups. For example, a series of programs by the Capitol District Deaf Center, in production at the time of our survey, resulted from one such tour.

For the cable company, community programming was a key asset to subscriber retention. This was one of the company's major concerns, according to Babbitt, while municipalities were just beginning to see what they could do with access. The year before our survey, Babbitt helped local politicians produce Video Christmas Cards, which elicited great feedback.

Access facilities at Capitol Cablevision included two half-inch portable decks and two single-tube cameras, a half-inch to 3/4-inch editing system, a studio with live feed and call-in capacity, a character generator and a time-base corrector. Equipment use was not free and training was required for its use. Still, about 75 percent of access programs were produced with this equipment. Other local sources of equipment included producers themselves, non-profit groups, high schools, and the public library.

Training was available on weekdays and weekday evenings. Professional internships were available to students from the State University of New York at Albany and, in the year following our survey, to Albany area high school students. In addition, SUNY students used the facilities in part of their curriculum, and their tapes played on the access channel, further increasing both training and programming at the access center.

The most frequent users of the two channels were community and minority organizations and libraries. The most frequent types of programs were variety shows, programs on minority issues and sports. Some highlights included "Real George's Back Room," Albany area new wave and rock music taped on location; "Signs of the Times," news and activities for deaf residents; and "Heartline," a two-hour information program by the Heart Association.

## Local TV - East Hampton
### A Non-Profit Media Center Runs Access

Local TV , a non-profit media center in East Hampton, on Long Island, had just become the access programming and production center for the local cable system at the time of our study. In fact, a new franchise with Sammons Communications was negotiated between the time of our written questionnaire and our follow-up interview, so we can compare — to a certain extent — access as a company-run operation and as a non-profit run operation.[6] Initially, we spoke to Donna Lukenbill, General Manager of the Sammons franchise in Amagansett, and Jill Schmidt and Fraser Dougherty of LTV. Later, we spoke to Ariel Dougherty and Eric Goldbard of LTV in our follow-up interview.

What is special about East Hampton, Amagansett, and the other East End towns served by this franchise? Known as the summer home of artists and as the second residence of the Manhattan elite, the Hamptons are also the home of those who work as fisherman or farmers, those who work in the hotels and restaurants, and those who hold the gamut of municipal and commercial occupations found in any small town. The area is community spirited, and people tend to involve themselves actively in local politics and government.

Sammons Communications was one of the few cable operators that made access available in nearly all its franchise areas in the state. The East

Hampton franchise, serving about 8,000 subscribers, was no exception. Facilities for access included one 3/4-inch portable deck, two single-tube cameras, a 3/4-inch editing system, a character generator, and a studio with call-in capability. About an hour of programming a week was produced and aired, at the time of our initial questionnaire, including a local news magazine, coverage of local government meetings, and educational shows.

Much of the programming was produced by local public high school students, who, in an innovative and highly successful program, had built their own studio and produced a variety of shows on local issues. (See the East Hampton High School profile in the Schools chapter.) Programs were also contributed by LTV, including profiles of local artists. Both Sammons and LTV hoped to expand equipment access, outreach, programming hours and diversity with the new access facililties and management they hoped to negotiate in the new franchise.

A year after the new franchise was in place and LTV was running access programming and production, the picture had indeed changed.

Facilities now included two portable 3/4-inch deck and camera set-ups, one half-inchportable camera and deck, a studio, one 3/4-inch editing set-up with two additional three-quarter-inch set-ups and one half-inch set-up planned, facilities for slide-to-tape transfer and some computer graphics. Fees for equipment use were on a sliding scale for access, non-profit and commercial use. For example, a slot of three and a half hours of studio time for access cost $40. Training was offered in studio production, portable production, editing and cablecasting. Cablecasting training was offered because a "VJ" format show was encouraged, in which producers could host shows of tapes made locally or elsewhere.

By the time of our follow-up interview, also, monthly producers' meetings developed feedback and a sense of community. We were told that almost fifty people had showed up at the meting preceding our interview. With a local touch, we were told, "Almost half were water signs."

Outreach had expanded somewhat to include announcements on the Community Bulletin Board, listings in one local newspaper, a schedule mailed with some local organizations' mailings, and plans for a newsletter.

Funding came from the franchise fee, additional support from Sammons, membership (LTV had a membership structure) and user fees.

What kind of programming did this new management produce? Access Channel 19 was "on the air" 45 hours per week. The most frequent types of programming were on arts, health, and local political and social issues, especially on the environment and the economy. Rather than listing the three most frequent users, Dougherty and Goldbard compared the roster of producers to a subway car, notable for its diversity. At that moment, current producers included artists, Police and Fire Departments, a landscaper and a hairdresser. Shows included tapes of town board meetings, an interview show about local artists, and almost no religious programming. There were rumors that a local soap opera might appear soon.

## LMC-TV - Larchmont-Mamaroneck
## Public and Educational Access
## Share Facilities

Public access center LMC-TV shared access facilities with the local high school, which had had a video production program for ten years by 1984. LMC-TV was part of the UA/Columbia cable system in West-chester County, which had other county-wide access programming as well as Local Origination programming produced by the local cable company. Coordinator David Trautman said it was good for access to share facilities with the school because the space and some equipment already existed and it kept the operation up with community activities. An added benefit for Trautman and his part-time assistant was the work of high school interns, who received school credit for their work. The school's early schedule and most residents' daily work schedules made time-sharing fairly easy. The high school used the video facility from 8 am to 3 pm and the community used it in the evening, from 3 to 11 pm. The fairly well endowed facility had two single-tube cameras, one half-inch portapak, two half-inch to 3/4-

inch editing systems and a 3/4-inch editing unit, plus a character generator, a TBC and a studio with a live feed. Some of this equipment -- plus the live feed, valued at $85,000 -- was leased for one dollar a year from the cable operator according to the terms of the franchise. Additional portapaks were occasionally made available by the high school. Training was offered in the evenings and on weekends for $40, and was required to use the facility, as in most access centers.

LMC-TV ran on a tight budget, despite its location in this wealthy New York suburb. Trautman found he had to allocate his budget very carefully, from the $85,000 allotted by the cable company for equipment and studio, to the $35,000 in operating costs for 1985 salaries supplies and equipment maintenance. Public involvement and support had been crucial, said Trautman. Access needs a "control body, someone to keep an eye on the franchise, track the record of the MSO (the local cable system's parent corporation), and seek out knowledgeable people." He recommended that access organizers "not take the cable company at its word" about costs and money, but get second opinions and find out what has been going on around the country.

To keep people interested and involved in production, three or four times a year Trautman held "programming meetings." Publicized in local newspapers and mailings, here community members talked about what they'd like to see on the channel, and found out what programs had been produced. At the most recent programming meeting, about fifty people had shown up. Of these, four or five people went on to become new producers.

The main problem Trautman found was that "producers get frustrated, mystified by TV slickness," so that developing enough programming was a struggle. But LMC-TV cablecast twelve hours a week in 1984, with variety shows, local political and social issues and individual producers' shows the most frequent program types. Highlights included "Bravura," a program profiling local youth with musical talent, "MHS Info," a daily news show from the high school, and "Hospice," a documentary by the local hospital.

Notes:

1. The Jones Intercable system which served Lockport had 25,344 subscribers at the time of our survey.

2. Schenectady Cablevision served 23,891 subscribers at the time of our survey.

3. Sammons Communications' Cortland franchise served 8,650 subscribers at the time of our survey.

4. The Kingston franchise served 19,765 subscribers. Woodstock included just 2,397 of these, according to the 1985 listings of the New York State Commission on Cable Television.

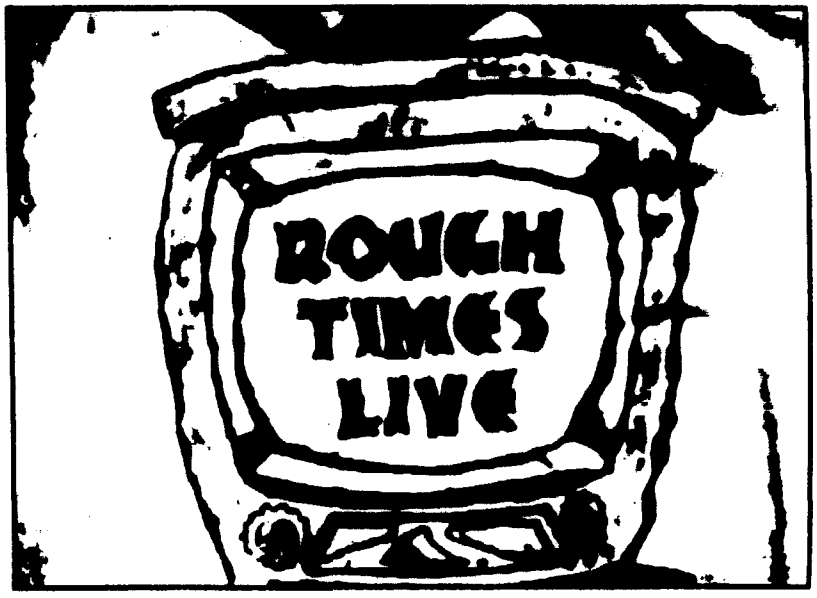
5. Capitol Cablevision is the largest franchise profiled here, with 48,436 subscribers.

6. The Sammons Amagansett franchise, which included several East End municipalities, had 6,737 subscribers at the time of our survey.

Lockport's active access channel often features local sports like this 15th Annual Canoe Club Classic produced by Kirk Adams.

"Community Camera," a talk show produced at Corning Community College by Irwin Stein, often focuses on local arts.

Walter Brooks is seen here with Emile De Antonio on Brooks' regular public affairs program, produced with S. Caldwell on American Cablesystems' Tarrytown access channel.




In "Rough Times Live," community member Walt Shepperd worked with young people to produce a regular show with advice, humor, entertainment and information for Syracuse area youth.

"Bravura" featured performances by young Larchmont musicians. Here, Emily Halpern plays the harp. Produced by Carole West and Joel Banow and shown on Larchmont-Mamaroneck Community TV.

New York State United Teachers distributed "Inside Your Schools" to teachers in many parts of the state. Local groups often added local segments to the half hour program. Produced by J. Stevens and P. Boespflug.

Paper Tiger TV's production collective has produced its weekly critique of mass communications since 1981, airing on Manhattan's access channels. This is a still from Myrna Bain's critique of Ebony


Apple Bytes' eye-catching community bulletin board is produced by students and volunteers at New York University's Alternate Media Center.

# Chapter 14
# Some Background: Federal Legislation and State Regulation

## Federal Legislation

The history of cable regulation concerning access has been somewhat complicated, on both the federal and state levels. Changing regulations, court decisions and cable law have all affected to some degree whether franchises have had access provisions and whether cable systems have provided access. However, access was not an issue in cable regulation until the late 1960s. Federal cable laws were debated in Congress in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but a comprehensive cable act was not passed until 1984. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), responsible for telecommunications, including radio, television, and satellite broadcasting, did not consider cable to be significant enough — or even within its jurisdiction — until the mid 1960s, when it issued some rulings concerning technical issues, such as standards for long-distance signal importation.

Until the mid-1970s, two major goals of FCC regulation were to encourage local over nationwide sources of programming, and to require a diversity of public service programming — news and information. And because broadcasting frequencies were considered a scarce public resource, access to which was vital to the functioning of democracy, regulation was considered necessary to ensure the First Amendment ideal that diverse sources of information and points of view should be available to the public. No regulation was considered necessary for print media because it was not considered a scarce resource and did not seem in danger of monopolization.

In 1969, the FCC adopted its *First Report and Order* mandating that cable systems with 3,500 or more subscribers originate programming locally. This was not a requirement for public access, however. Many systems set up small studios staffed by professionals in the hope that they would draw local advertising dollars. By 1972, most of these studios were abandoned as local advertising revenue failed to justify their expense. Later, according to George Stoney, some of these unused studios became the first studios for public access -- as in Cape May, New Jersey and Galveston, Texas.

In any case, Midwest Video, a cable company based in Little Rock, Arkansas, challenged the FCC's authority to mandate local programming. In 1972, the Supreme Court decided in favor of the FCC. A few months earlier, the FCC had held hearings, and in the same year it issued its *Third Report and Order*, requiring cable systems in the one hundred largest markets to delegate a total of three channels for public, educational and government (PEG) programming, setting a compliance date of March 1, 1977.

In 1976, the FCC amended its rules to include all systems with 3,500 or more subscribers, and required four channels, three PEG and one leased access. These could be consolidated into one channel until demand grew, and fees could be charged for live studio programming for programs over five minutes long. At least one public access channel had to be made available in perpetuity, free, on a non-discriminatory basis, and cable operators would have no jurisdiction over the content of the programming.

In 1978, Midwest Video filed its second challenge, and the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals decided that year that the FCC had exceeded its authority and jurisdiction. This ruling was affirmed by the Supreme Court in 1979. Cable systems were no longer required by the Federal Government to provide channels for access. However, the courts ruled that local franchising authorities could require access channels.

The 1984 Cable Act, debated in various forms since the early 1980s, affirmed these precedents and stressed the importance of access channels and provisions. The report on the bill from the House Committee on Energy and Commerce noted:

> "One of the greatest challenges over the years in establishing communications policy has been in assuring access to the electronic media by people other than the licensees or

owners of that media.... Public access channels are often the video equivalent of the speaker's soapbox or the electronic parallel to the printed leaflet. They provide groups and individuals who generally have not had access to the electronic media with the opportunity to become sources of information in the electronic marketplace of ideas. PEG channels also contribute to an informed citizenry by bringing local schools into the home, and by showing the public local government at work. HR 4103 [the cable act] continues the policy of allowing cities to specify in cable franchises that channel capacity and other facilities be devoted to such use."[2]

The main provisions concerning public access of the 1984 Cable Act state that:

- Access channels and "services, facilities and equipment" to be used for access can be required, and their provision can be enforced by franchising authorities.
- Capital costs and non-monetary payments (i.e. in-kind services and equipment) for access are exempt from the five percent franchise fee limit.[3]
- Franchising authorities must establish rules and procedures for a cable operator's use of unused (or fallow) access channel time and for reallocation of that time to access when demand grows.
- Cable operators are exempt from any editorial control of access programming content, while access producers are liable for any obscene, libelous or slanderous programming they produce and cablecast.[4]

## New York State Access Regulation

Although cable TV has existed in New York State since its earliest days, little need for state regulation was seen until the 1970s, when cable systems and cable service began to grow beyond the re-transmittal of broadcast television. The New York State Commission on Cable Television was created in 1972 by Section 28, Articles 811-831 of Executive Law. The principle public policy goals envisioned by the creators of the Commission were the protection of free speech, the expansion of consumer choice, and the minimization of social and economic inequities.[5]

The law establishing the commission established a strong state role in overseeing the development of cable communications. It justified this role because the state's municipalities did not have this expertise. The commission's mandate was to oversee and set guidelines for community planning for cable and franchising, provide advice and assistance to local governments and community groups, and set technical standards for construction and operation of cable systems. One way the commission would accomplish these goals would be by reviewing and certifying all cable franchises in the state. Between January 1,1973 and July 1,1981, the Cable Commission approved 366 new franchises, nearly tripling the number of cable subscribers in the state from 540,000 to 1,541,800. During the same period, cable industry revenue increased over 800 percent, from $32 million in 1972 to $250 million in 1981.[6]

The Commission found particular benefit to the state in community access and community programming on cable, and during the 1970s it initiated or participated in several activities to help communities develop this programming. Between 1976 and 1979, it worked with local community access groups as well as regional organizations to present local meetings, a region-wide conference and a seminar to bring access advocates together to develop public access use in the state.

In its 1981 *Agenda for Government Involvement*, the Cable Commission specifically noted its role in developing cable access. There, it stated that it should "promote access by the public to cable communications and promote the development of public, educational and municipal programming," and "protect the individual right to freedom of speech in relation to telecommunication systems and services." Article 28 of Executive Law also required the commission to "assure channel availability for municipal services, educational television... local expression and communications content services."[7]

The Commission's 1981 *Agenda* also noted that while federal regulation mandated access channels, a State regulatory role was unnecessary.

But state activity was required by the change in the federal role after the Supreme Court's 1979 Midwest II decision.[8]

In 1981, the Commission outlined a range of activities it would undertake to develop community programming in New York State. These were listed in the 1981 *Agenda* as:

> "1) The provision of advisory services to groups interested in cable channel access.
>
> 2) The establishment of a library of information on new utilizations of television in the state and in the nation.
>
> 3) The provision of liaison service between local groups interested in utilizing cable channels and cable system operators, aimed at the distribution of locally produced programming;
>
> 4) The provision of referral services between persons in different areas who are developing community access centers and public, educational, and municipal programming."[9]

In addition, the commission was charged to identify and promote innovative uses of cable in communities throughout the state, and it initiated a series of "implementing actions," mostly concerning the development of access. These were specified in the *Agenda* as:

> "Monitor operations and potential problem areas in provision of access channels by cable television companies.
>
> Provide advice and assistance to individuals and organizations interested in developing new programming sources for cable television.
>
> Provide advice and assistance to municipalities interested in including access provisions in their local franchises.
>
> Explore sources of financial support for development of new cable television programming services.
>
> Sponsor regional and statewide conference of groups interested in or involved in community programming.
>
> Maintain a clearinghouse of information regarding innovative utilizations of cable communications around the country."[10]

The *Agenda* added that in the future the commission planned to survey access users, channel usage and facilities.[11]

One of the main ways in which the Cable Commission has sought to implement these goals and activities is through regulations and franchise guidelines. Early in 1980, the commission drafted a series of rules governing "Channels and Facilities for Locally Originated Educational and Public Service Programming," which were intended to be included in each cable franchise agreement in the state as it was granted, amended or renewed. These were presented for public comment in the fall of 1980 in several hearings throughout the state, and adopted in 1982. The date for cable franchisees' compliance was extended to 1984. But the imminent passage of a federal cable law both prevented the commission from finalizing the effective date and made some revisions necessary. Several cycles of revisions and hearings followed as the guidelines were presented to the public in the following years.

Public hearings and written comments submitted for each round attracted access producers, public interest advocates, local and statewide institutions, and the highly organized associations of cable companies in the state's cable industry. In 1988, the rules were finally adopted. (A copy is included here as an appendix.)

The new rules were under consideration for nearly the whole period during which we conducted our research, and thus the people we spoke to had not been affected by them. We include a discussion of them here, however, because they could affect access after 1988.

The access guidelines were initially to be included in each franchise at its adoption, amendment or renewal, but subsequent versions applied to all systems whether or not they were explicitly adopted in franchises. The different versions of the guidelines or rules dealt with channel time availability for access, use of "fallow time" and reallocation of this time for access as demand develops, administrative entities and procedures,

public notice of access time and resource availability, facilities and financial support, technical standards, and settlement procedures for disputes. The subsequent versions varied considerably in concerns, specificity and methods, and consequently in their support for access.

## Highlights of the 1988 State Access Standards

The version the Cable Commission finally adopted include six major sections, all part of section 595.4 of the Commission's rules, entitled *Minimum Standards for Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) Access.* The first section, "(a) Definitions" specifies that "PEG access facilities" include channel capacity along with facilities and equipment for the use of that capacity . "Local use" refers to residents of New York State. Also, it defines the "access cablecast day" as a day or part of a day in which PEG access facilities are available for use, clarifying other rules about when additional channel capacity must be made available and when cable franchisees can use access channels.

Access channel capacity is discussed in part (b). The rules require 21-channel systems with at least fifteen channels in use to designate "one full-time activated channel for public access" and one "full-time activated channel for educational and governmental use." A second educational/ governmental channel must be made available if the first channel is used for twelve hours per day in any ninety-day period. Cable systems with less than 21 channels must designate one full-time activated channel for combined PEG use. No provision is made for additional public access channels.

Part (c) details rules for the administration and use of PEG access channel capacity. It says that a municipality may designate, at any time during the franchise, either a pre-existing or a new organization to administer public access. Educational and government access must be administered by a committee appointed by local government, with some representation by local school districts and possible representation by the cable franchisee. Subsequently, the commission proposed rules concerning the appointment and operation of these non-profit, third-party access entities, but neither set of rules requires that public access users be represented in these administrative entities, either by appointment or by election.

Access facilities must have the technical ability to play back pre-recorded programming and transmit programming "consistent with the designated uses of PEG access channels." No mention is made of facilities to produce programming.

The access channel itself must announce hourly that public access facilities are available and tell how to get in touch with the access facility. In addition, subscribers must receive written notice of access opportunities each year. Public access must be scheduled on a first-come, first served, non-discriminatory basis, free of charge and without editorial control by either the cable franchisee or the municipality. This language is basic to the concept of access and is consistent with federal cable law.

The rules also require that the entity administering public access must maintain a record of public access users' names and addresses, that this record be available for public inspection for two years, and that PEG channels be offered on the lowest tier of service, so all subscribers may receive it.

The "fallow time" rule is particularly crucial to those interested in protecting public access because it defines when cable operators can use access channels for other purposes -- and when access programming can return to the channel. The 1988 access rules permit the cable franchisee to use PEG time for other purposes only if there is no blank channel on the same level of service and if no PEG channel time is scheduled 72 hours in advance. Any PEG programming scheduled 72 hours in advance has precedence over other programs. In systems with over forty channels, if the cable franchisee's programming on the access channel continues for ninety days, the franchisee must suspend programming until minimum PEG use is maintained.

The remaining parts (d) through (f) deal with effective dates, waivers, rulings on implementation, the inclusion of additional franchise provi-

sions concerning PEG access, and "severability." Basically, the rules were effective as of December 30, 1988, but part (b), dealing with channel capacity, is effective as each franchise is granted, amended or renewed after that effective date.

In the meantime, access advocates can try to get help from the New York State Commission on Cable Television, in Albany.

**Notes:**

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2. *Cable Franchise Policy and Communications Act of 1984*, House of Representatives Report 98-934, August 1, 1984, Purpose and Summary, page 30.
3. The limit on the size of the franchise fee which can be required to be paid to cities or franchising authorities under the 1984 Cable Act.
4. Sections 611, 622, 624, *Cable Franchise Policy and Communications Act of 1984*, House of Representatives Report 98-934.
5. *Agenda for Government Involvement*, 1981, docket no. 90112, Cable Communications in New York State, page 5.
6. Ibid, page 1.
7. Ibid, Section 5B, page 8; Section 7C, page 9; and Article 28, Section 811.
8. Ibid, Section 5B, page 109.
9. Ibid, Section 5B, page 109.
10. Ibid, pages 113-114.
11. Ibid, page 114.

# Chapter 15
# Recommendations

Chapter 1 summarizes the results of our survey of cable access in New York State, and both the introduction and Chapter 2 sketch a profile of access operations and access programs as they were in 1985, the year of our survey.

Here we look to the future. How can the information in this report be used to make access work better?

There are many small messages this report contains, many hints and models of what to do and what not to do to operate a successful public access cable center. But the overriding message is that support for access must be comprehensive for access to begin to achieve its potential as a community communications medium.

This means not only offering the basics -- channel time and equipment to make use of it -- but also outreach to new users, training on the use of the equipment, regularly scheduled time slots so that programs can build audiences, and publicity of both individual programs and the channel itself. The PARTICIPATE study shows that access operations with all these factors supported many more hours of access programming than those without.

Non-profit access centers, with their own organizational priorities, identity and momentum, were more likely to offer all this support for access than other kinds of access operations, according to our study.

Individuals made a crucial difference in whether access became a success in the New York State communities we studied. One staff person's enthusiasm, community networking or support for access users's needs seemed to make access thrive in several communities beyond what one would otherwise expect.

But individuals burn out. This seems to be one main reason why access' first heady years in the 1970s so rarely extended into the 1980s. Stable funding levels and administrative structures are important. So is organized community support -- in the form of cable commissions, access users groups, or supportive media centers. These groups help insulate access users and staff persons from debilitating confilcts, whether over funding, use of equipment, availability of channel time, or other matters. Community support allows access to gain a foothold and begin to provide a way for ordinary -- and extraordinary -- people in our communities to use television to express their thoughts, opinions and visions.

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## Appendix A
## PARTICIPATE Profile of Cable Systems with Access in New York State in 1984-85

| cable system | access channels | average hrs/wk | equip-ment | train-ing | reg. sched. | publi-city | out-reach | most freq. users | most freq. programs | other local programming |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adams-Russell Cable Services NY-Nassau | <1 | 1.8 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | BLN | IJU | LO, ED, GOVT, LEASED |
| Adams-Russell Cable Services-Rensselaer | 2 | 50 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | ABO | ABE | LO, ED, GOVT, LEASED |
| Alfred Cable System | <1 | 0 | | | | | | | | |
| American Cablesystems-Tarrytown | 1 | 33 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | ACF | ADE | LO |
| American Cablevision of Webster | 3 | 12 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | ABC | ABX | LO, GOVT |
| American Community Cablevision | 1 | 30 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | DMN | FOX | LO |
| Auburn Cablevision, Inc. | <1 | 5 | | | √ | | | AN | ATX | LO, ED |
| Battenkill NewChannels | 1 | 5 | √ | √ | | √ | | AN | AX | |
| Better TV, Inc. | 1 | 24 | | | | | | AEL | AMX | |
| Bradley TV Cable Service | <1 | 0 | | | | | | | | LO |
| Brookhaven Cable TV, Inc. | <1 | 20 | | | √ | √ | | BLN | | LO, ED, GOVT, LEASED |

| cable system | access channels | average hrs/wk | equip-ment | train-ing | reg. sched. | publi-city | out-reach | most freq. users | most freq. programs | other local programming |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cable TV Systems, Inc. | <1 | 0 | | | | | | NO | IX | |
| Cablevision Industries-Batavia | <1 | 2 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | ALD | AIS | LO |
| Cablevision IndustrieMs-Liberty | <1 | 0 | √ | √ | | | | BLN | B,X | LO, ED, GOVT, LEASED |
| Capitol Cablevision | 3 | 27 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | ABM | FOX | LO, ED, LEASED |
| Champlain NewChannels | <1 | 4 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | ABN | BEX | |
| Classic Cable | <1 | 10 | √ | √ | | √ | | ALN | AIX | LO |
| Colonial Cablevision | <1 | 0 | √ | | | | | | | |
| Cox Cable of New York | 1 | 4 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | BMN | DIK | LEASED, other |
| Cox Cable Resort | 1 | 24 | √ | √ | √ | | | ABD | ABI | |
| Fredonia Cablevision | <1 | 15 | √ | √ | | √ | | MN | ET | LO, LEASED |
| Fulton NewChannels | <1 | 0 | | | | | | | | |
| Gateway Cablevision of Plattsburgh | 0 | | | | | | | | | |
| Greater Rochester Cablevision | >1 | 38 | √ | √ | √ | √ | | ABL | ABS | LO, ED, GOVT, LEASED |
| Group W Cable of Brockport | <1 | 4 | √ | √ | √ | | | OMN | ITX | LO, ED, GOVT, LEASED |
| Group W Cable of Elmira | <1 | 2.5 | | | | √ | √ | LMN | ISX | LO |
| Group W Cable of Ilion and Hamilton | <1 | 1 | √ | | √ | | | ABN | ABX | LO |
| Group W Cable of Islip | <1 | 10 | √ | | √ | √ | | BLO | JNS | LO, ED, GOVT, LEASED |